

Story 736 (1976 Tape 11)

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Location: Yakacık village,
Söğüt kaza,
Bilecik Province

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Chand
Eater of the Dead

Once there was and once there was not a woman who had but one child, and that child was a son. This young man made his living as a sharecropper.¹ His mother was pleased with him in every way but one, and that was his wish not to marry. He simply was not interested in marriage, and this bothered his mother greatly. She frequently said to him, "Come, my son, let us arrange a marriage for you. We shall find a suitable girl for you." But he resisted all such efforts that she made

Finally, however, the people living in that village became concerned about having an unmarried man of his years in their midst, and soon they began to insist that he be married.² So they all worked together to help his mother

¹Sharecropping as such now seems peculiarly American to most Americans, but of course it is not. The Turkish word which is exactly equivalent to sharecropper is ortakçı, the word used here.

²Many villagers take a very dim view of a man's remaining single. Single men are viewed as a mild threat to the social balance of a village, and their social intercourse is much more restricted than that of married men.

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find a girl for him, and after all necessary preparations had been made, they conducted his wedding and had him married

After the wedding the young husband gave his wife ten keys to the rooms in his house. He said to her, "This, this, those rooms over there you may enter whenever you wish, but the tenth room you must never enter." The wife did as he instructed, going in and out of the first nine rooms quite freely but staying away from the last room in the house. The two of them got along very happily together

*Taboo
Forbidden room*

But one day the wife became very curious about that tenth room. She decided to unlock the door and just peek into the room without actually entering it. When she unlocked the door and looked inside, she was horrified at what she saw. This secret room was filled with the remains of human bodies. In one corner there was pile of human heads. In another corner there was a heap of shrouds. She concluded that her husband must have watched for burials during the day and then gone to the graves by night, exhumed the bodies, and brought them here to eat.

The shock of seeing the mutilated remains of so many bodies in this room almost drove the girl out of her mind. From that time on, she grew pale and paler, and she became ill. When the man realized that his wife's condition was growing worse and worse, he said to her, "I shall go to your parents

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tell them that you are ill, and I shall invite them here to stay with you for a while."

After that, he left the house to call on her parents. When he reached the girl's home village, he went to her mother said, "Your daughter requests that you give me for her a of your salvar,³ one of your dresses, and a scarf."

the old woman gave him these three things, he took them and returned home.

Disguise There he put on the salvar and dress, and he wrapped about his head the old woman's scarf. Entering the room where his wife lay, he asked, "My daughter, have you become ill?"

"Yes, Mother.

"My daughter, I sent you here healthy and strong. What happened to you? You look very pale." (The reason that he was asking her about her health was that he wanted to know exactly what had made her ill.

"Mother, I have a terrible problem. My husband gave me many keys when I first came here. He said that I might open up all of the rooms in the house but one with those keys. For some time, I did just what he said to do, going in and out

³Salvar are Turkish baggy trousers. Those worn by women contain many yards of fabric and are quite voluminous. Those worn by men fit more closely, and sometimes may be distinguished from other trousers only by their very low crotch, which is usually at knee level.

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of all the rooms except that last room. But later I opened the door of the forbidden room, too. Inside that room I saw the heads of many corpses. He apparently went by night and dug from their graves people who had been buried by day, and then later ate them." Thinking that she was speaking to her own mother, the girl described all of these things

When he learned that the girl had discovered his secret, he killed her. He sent a message to her parents, saying, "Your daughter was sick for a month and then died." When his wife was buried, he observed carefully where the grave was located.